
March 1, 2014

Week 9, “Jubilant”

Discussion Questions

Old Testament

1. Leviticus 19:19-31 contains prohibitions against (Lev. 19:19) crossbreeding animals, planting different kinds of seeds in the same fields, using different materials in the same garment, (Lev. 19:20) having sex with a slave, (Lev. 19:23) eating the fruit of a newly planted tree, (Lev. 19:26) eating meat with blood still in it, (Lev. 19:27) a certain hair style, (Lev. 19:28) tattoos, (Lev. 19:29) prostituting one's daughter, (Lev. 19:30) violating the Sabbath, and (Lev. 19:31) turning to mediums or wizards. Should we assume from their placement in the same section that God views all of these matters with equal seriousness? Are we still bound by any or all of these rules?
2. Old Testament: What is the Year of Jubilee? How does it work, and what is the point of it?
3. How do the Israelite Year of Jubilee and “debt relief” compare to modern political, economic, financial and legal concepts??

New Testament

- Why did Jesus lay his hands on the blind man twice, in order to heal him? Mark 8:22-26
- Jesus said in Mark 10:14-15, *“Allow the little children to come to me! Don't forbid them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Most certainly I tell you, whoever will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child, he will in no way enter into it.”* Should we place any emphasis on Bible study if God admits those who are as ignorant as little children?

Notes and Commentary

Old Testament

Leviticus 19:19-31 contains prohibitions against (Lev. 19:19) crossbreeding animals, planting different kinds of seeds in the same fields, (Lev. 19:20) having sex with a slave, (Lev. 19:23) eating the fruit of a newly planted tree, (Lev. 19:26) eating meat with blood still in it, (Lev. 19:27) a certain hair style, (Lev. 19:28) tattoos, (Lev. 19:29) prostituting one's daughter, (Lev. 19:30) violating the Sabbath, and (Lev. 19:31) turning to mediums or wizards. Should we assume from their placement in the same section that God views all of these matters with equal seriousness? Are we still bound by any or all of these rules? All of these matters were serious enough for God to give his people specific rules. Yet today some of the rules seem to be trivial or not applicable; while others still apply. Is our current perception of these rules due to our having fallen into sin? Or is there some Biblically justifiable reason why some rules apply to modern Christians, while others do not?

Are modern Christians just able to pick and choose which Old Testament laws still apply? Many people today say that the definition of right and wrong changes with popular culture. That is, morality is whatever the majority of people say is moral at any given time. Hence moral behavior changes over time. This point of view eventually leads to the conclusion that nothing is really right or wrong. Even mass murder would be acceptable, if enough people agreed murder was morally acceptable.¹ Of course this view—moral relativism—is nonsense. But the Biblical proof requires a bit of work.

First, a look at the background of each of these rules:

1. (LEV. 19:19) CROSSBREEDING ANIMALS, PLANTING DIFFERENT KINDS OF SEEDS IN THE SAME FIELDS, AND USING DIFFERENT MATERIALS IN THE SAME GARMENT.

- (a) **[Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible]** *A law against mixtures.* God in the beginning made the cattle after their kind (Gen. i. 25), and we must acquiesce in the order of nature God hath established, believing that is best and sufficient, and not covet monsters. Add thou not unto his works, lest he reprove thee; for it is the excellency of the work of God that nothing can, without making it worse, be either put to it or taken from it, Eccl. iii. 14. As what God has joined we must not separate, so what he has separated we must not join. The sowing of mingled corn and the wearing of linsey-woolsey garments are forbidden, either as superstitious customs of the heathen or to intimate how careful they should be not to mingle themselves with the heathen nor to weave any of the usages of the Gentiles into God's ordinances. Ainsworth suggests that it was to lead Israel to the simplicity and sincerity of religion, and to all the parts and doctrines of the law and gospel in their distinct kinds. As faith is necessary, good works are necessary, but to mingle these together in the cause of our justification before God is forbidden, Gal. ii. 16.
- (b) **[Treasury of Scripture Knowledge (1880)]** These practices might have been considered as altering the original constitution of God in creation; and this is the view which the Jews, and also Josephus and Philo, take of the subject. There were, probably, also both moral and political reasons for these prohibitions. With respect to heterogenous mixtures among cattle, it was probably forbidden, to prevent excitements to the abominations condemned in the preceding chapter. As to seeds, in many cases, it would be highly improper to sow different kinds in the same plot of ground. If oats and wheat, for instance, were sown together, the latter would be injured, and the former ruined. This prohibition may therefore be regarded as a prudential agricultural maxim. As to different kinds of garments, the prohibition might be intended against pride and vanity in clothing.
- (c) **[Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (1871)]**
Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind—This prohibition was probably intended to discourage a practice which seemed to infringe upon the economy which God has established in the animal kingdom.
Thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed—This also was directed against an idolatrous practice, namely, that of the ancient Zabians, or fire-worshippers, who sowed different seeds, accompanying the act with magical rites and invocations; and commentators have generally thought the design of this and the preceding law was to put an end to the unnatural lusts and foolish superstitions which were prevalent among the heathen. But the reason of the prohibition was

¹Sadly, in the case of the unborn, murder has become morally acceptable by the majority. An estimated 57 million abortions have taken place in the United States since *Roe v. Wade*, in 1973. Almost 1.3 billion abortions have taken place worldwide since 1980. (Sources: The *Guttmacher Institute*, <http://www.guttmacher.org>, 2-27-2014; and *Life Matters TV Program*, <http://www.lifematterstv.org/abortioncounters.html>, 2-27-2014)

probably deeper: for those who have studied the diseases of land and vegetables tell us, that the practice of mingling seeds is injurious both to flowers and to grains. "If the various genera of the natural order Gramineæ, which includes the grains and the grasses, should be sown in the same field, and flower at the same time, so that the pollen of the two flowers mix, a spurious seed will be the consequence, called by the farmers chess. It is always inferior and unlike either of the two grains that produced it, in size, flavor, and nutritious principles. Independently of contributing to disease the soil, they never fail to produce the same in animals and men that feed on them" [WHITLAW].

Neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee—Although this precept, like the other two with which it is associated, was in all probability designed to root out some superstition, it seems to have had a further meaning. The law, it is to be observed, did not prohibit the Israelites wearing many different kinds of cloths together, but only the two specified; and the observations and researches of modern science have proved that "wool, when combined with linen, increases its power of passing off the electricity from the body. In hot climates, it brings on malignant fevers and exhausts the strength; and when passing off from the body, it meets with the heated air, inflames and excoriates like a blister" [WHITLAW]. (See Eze 44:17, 18).

2. (LEV. 19:20) HAVING SEX WITH A SLAVE.

- (a) **[Clarke's 1810/1825 commentary and critical notes on the Bible]** Had she been free, the law required that she should be put to death; (see De 22:24;) but as she was a slave, she is supposed to have less self-command, and therefore less guilt: but as it is taken for granted she did not make resistance, or did consent, she is to be scourged, and the man is to bring a ram for a trespass-offering.
- (b) **[Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible]** A law for punishing adultery committed with one that was a bondmaid that was espoused, 20-22. If she had not been espoused, the law appointed no punishment at all; being espoused, if she had not been a bondmaid, the punishment had been no less than death: but, being as yet a bondmaid (though before the completing of her espousals she must have been made free), the capital punishment is remitted, and they shall both be scourged; or, as some think, the woman only, and the man was to bring a sacrifice. It was for the honour of marriage, though but begun by betrothing, that the crime should be punished; but it was for the honour of freedom that it should not be punished as the debauching of a free woman was, so great was the difference then made between bond and free (Gal. iv. 30); but the gospel of Christ knows no such distinction, Col. iii. 11.

3. (LEV. 19:23) EATING THE FRUIT OF A NEWLY PLANTED TREE.

- (a) **[Clarke's 1810/1825 commentary and critical notes on the Bible]** The fruit of a young tree cannot be good; for not having arrived at a state of maturity, the juices cannot be sufficiently elaborated to produce fruit excellent in its kind. The Israelites are commanded not to eat of the fruit of a tree till the fifth year after its planting: in the three first years the fruit is unwholesome; in the fourth year the fruit is holy, it belongs to God, and should be consecrated to him, Le 19:24; and in the fifth year and afterward the fruit may be employed for common use, Le 19:25.
- (b) **[Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (1871)]** The wisdom of this law is very striking. Every gardener will teach us not to let fruit trees bear in their earliest years, but to pluck off the blossoms: and for this reason, that they will thus thrive the better, and bear more abundantly afterwards. The very expression, 'to

regard them as uncircumcised,' suggests the propriety of pinching them off; I do not say cutting them off, because it is generally the hand, and not a knife, that is employed in this operation

- (c) **[John Wesley's Notes on the Bible]** As uncircumcised - That is, As unclean, not to be eaten but cast away. This precept was serviceable, To the trees themselves, which grew the better and faster, being early stript of those fruits, which otherwise would have drawn away much more of the strength from the tree. To men, both because the fruit then was less wholesome, and because hereby men were taught to bridle their appetites; a lesson of great use and absolute necessity in a holy life.

4. (LEV. 19:26) EATING MEAT WITH BLOOD STILL IN IT.

- (a) Repeats **Leviticus 17:10 (WEB)**. "Any man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who live as foreigners among them, who eats any kind of blood, I will set my face against that soul who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people."

5. (LEV. 19:27) A CERTAIN HAIR STYLE.

- (a) **[Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible]** There was a superstition even in trimming themselves used by the heathen, which must not be imitated by the people of God: You shall not round the corners of your heads. Those that worshipped the hosts of heaven, in honour of them, cut their hair so as that their heads might resemble the celestial globe; but, as the custom was foolish itself, so, being done with respect to their false gods, it was idolatrous.
- (b) **[Adam Clarke's 1810/1825 commentary and critical notes on the Bible]** [Verse 27] and the following verse evidently refer to customs which must have existed among the Egyptians when the Israelites sojourned in Egypt; and what they were it is now difficult, even with any probability, to conjecture. Herodotus observes that the Arabs shave or cut their hair round, in honour of Bacchus, who, they say, had his hair cut in this way, lib. iii., cap. 8. He says also that the Macians, a people of Libya, cut their hair round, so as to leave a tuft on the top of the head, lib. iv., cap. 175. In this manner the Chinese cut their hair to the present day. This might have been in honour of some idol, and therefore forbidden to the Israelites.

The hair was much used in divination among the ancients, and for purposes of religious superstition among the Greeks; and particularly about the time of the giving of this law, as this is supposed to have been the era of the Trojan war. We learn from Homer that it was customary for parents to dedicate the hair of their children to some god; which, when they came to manhood, they cut off and consecrated to the deity. Achilles, at the funeral of Patroclus, cut off his golden locks which his father had dedicated to the river god Sperchius, and threw them into the flood.

From Virgil we learn that the topmost lock of hair was dedicated to the infernal gods; see his account of the death of Dido:

*"Nondum illi flavum Proserpina vertice crinem
 Abstulerat, Stygioque caput damnaverat orco—
 Hunc ego Diti
 Sacrum jussa fero; teque isto corpore solvo.
 Sic ait, et dextra crinem secat."*
 AEneid, lib. iv., ver. 698.

*The sisters had not cut the topmost hair,
 Which Proserpine and they can only know.
 Nor made her sacred to the shades below—
 This offering to the infernal gods I bear;
 Thus while she spoke, she cut the fatal hair.*
 DRYDEN.

If the hair was rounded, and dedicated for purposes of this kind, it will at once account for the prohibition in this verse.

[*The corners of thy beard.*] Probably meaning the hair of the cheek that connects the hair of the head with the beard. This was no doubt cut in some peculiar manner, for the superstitious purposes mentioned above. Several of our own countrymen wear this said hair in a curious form; for what purposes they know best: we cannot say precisely that it is the ancient Egyptian custom revived. From the images and paintings which remain of the ancient Egyptians, we find that they were accustomed to shave the whole hair off their face, except merely that upon the chin, which last they cut off only in times of mourning.

- (c) **[Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (1871)]** (27. **Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, &c.**—) It seems probable that this fashion had been learned by the Israelites in Egypt, for the ancient Egyptians had their dark locks cropped short or shaved with great nicety, so that what remained on the crown appeared in the form of a circle surrounding the head, while the beard was dressed into a square form. This kind of coiffure had a highly idolatrous meaning; and it was adopted, with some slight variations, by almost all idolaters in ancient times. (Jer 9:25, 26; 25:23, where "in the utmost corners" means having the corners of their hair cut.) Frequently a lock or tuft of hair was left on the hinder part of the head, the rest being cut round in the form of a ring, as the Turks, Chinese, and Hindus do at the present day.
- (neither shalt thou mar, &c.**—) The Egyptians used to cut or shave off their whiskers, as may be seen in the coffins of mummies, and the representations of divinities on the monuments. But the Hebrews, in order to separate them from the neighboring nations, or perhaps to put a stop to some existing superstition, were forbidden to imitate this practice. It may appear surprising that Moses should condescend to such minutiae as that of regulating the fashion of the hair and the beard—matters which do not usually occupy the attention of a legislator—and which appear widely remote from the province either of government or of a religion. A strong presumption, therefore, arises that he had in mind by these regulations to combat some superstitious practices of the Egyptians.

6. (LEV. 19:28) TATTOOS.

- (a) **[Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible]** They must not make cuts or prints in their flesh for the dead; for the heathen did so to pacify the infernal deities they

dreamt of, and to render them propitious² to their deceased friends. Christ by his sufferings has altered the property of death, and made it a true friend to every true Israelite; and now, as there needs nothing to make death propitious to us (for, if God be so, death is so of course), so we sorrow not as those that have no hope. Those whom the God of Israel had set apart for himself must not receive the image and superscription of these dunghill deities.

- (b) **[John Wesley's Notes on the Bible] *Cuttings in your flesh***—Which the Gentiles commonly did both in the worship of their idols, and in their solemn mournings, Jer 16:6.

- (c) **[John Gill's Expositor]**

Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead,

Either with their nails, tearing their cheeks and other parts, or with any instrument, knife, razor, &c. Jarchi says, it was the custom of the Amorites, when anyone died, to cut their flesh, as it was of the Scythians, as Herodotus relates, even those of the royal family; for a king they cut off a part of the ear, shaved the hair round about, cut the arms about, wounded the forehead and nose, and transfixed the left hand with arrows; and so the Carthaginians, who might receive it from the Phoenicians, being a colony of theirs, used to tear their hair and mouths in mourning, and beat their breasts; and with the Romans the women used to tear their cheeks in such a manner that it was forbid by the law of the twelve tables, which some have thought was taken from hence: and all this was done to appease the infernal deities, and to give them satisfaction for the deceased, and to make them propitious to them, as Varro affirms; and here it is said to be made "for the soul", for the soul of the departed, to the honour of it, and for its good, though the word is often used for a dead body: now, according to the Jewish canons, whosoever made but one cutting for a dead person was guilty, and to be scourged; and he that made one for five dead men, or five cuttings for one dead man, was obliged to scourging for everyone of them:

nor print any marks upon you;

Aben Ezra observes, there are some that say this is in connection with the preceding clause, for there were who marked their bodies with a known figure, by burning, for the dead; and he adds, and there are to this day such, who are marked in their youth in their faces, that they may be known; these prints or marks were made with ink or black lead, or, however, the incisions in the flesh were filled up therewith; but this was usually done as an idolatrous practice; so says Ben Gerson, this was the custom of the Gentiles in ancient times, to imprint upon themselves the mark of an idol, to show that they were his servants; and the law cautions from doing this, as he adds, to the exalted name (the name of God): in the Misnah it is said, a man is not guilty unless he writes the name, as it is said, Le 19:28; which the Talmudists and the commentators interpret of the name of an idol, and not of God:

7. (LEV. 19:29) PROSTITUTING ONE'S DAUGHTER.

- (a) **[John Wesley's Notes on the Bible] *Do not prostitute***—As the Gentiles frequently did for the honour of some of their idols, to whom women were consecrated, and publicly prostituted.
- (b) **[Adam Clarke's 1810/1825 commentary and critical notes on the Bible]** This was a very frequent custom, and with examples of it writers of antiquity abound. The Cyprian women, according to Justin, gained that portion which their husbands received with them at marriage by previous public prostitution. And the Phoenicians, according to Augustine, made a gift to Venus of the gain acquired by the public prostitution of their daughters, previously to their marriage. "Veneri donum dabant, et prostitutiones filiarum, antequam jungerent eas viris."³—*De Civit. Del, lib. xviii., c. 5*; and see *Calmet*.

² *Propitious* means "convenient; auspicious; favorable; kind; as, a propitious season; a propitious breeze." [1913 Webster]

³ Offered as a gift to Venus, the prostitution of their daughters, before being married to these men

- (c) **[Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible]** The prostituting of their daughters to uncleanness, which is here forbidden, seems to have been practised by the heathen in their idolatrous worships, for with such abominations those unclean spirits which they worshipped were well pleased. And when lewdness obtained as a religious rite, and was committed in their temples, no marvel that the land became full of that wickedness, which, when it entered at the temple-doors, overspread the land like a mighty torrent, and bore down all the fences of virtue and modesty. The devil himself could not have brought such abominations into their lives if he had not first brought them into their worships. And justly were those given up to vile affections who forsook the holy God, and gave divine honours to impure spirits. Those that dishonour God are thus suffered to dishonour themselves and their families.

8. (LEV. 19:30) VIOLATING THE SABBATH.

- (a) **[Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (1871)]** This precept is frequently repeated along with the prohibition of idolatrous practices, and here it stands closely connected with the superstitions forbidden in the previous verses.
- (b) **[John Gill's Expositor]**
Ye shall keep my sabbaths,
 By attending to the worship and service of God on sabbath days, they and their children would be preserved from the idolatry of the Gentiles, and all the filthy practices attending it:
and reverence my sanctuary;
 and not defile it by such impurities as were committed in the temples of idols: the sanctuary being an holy place, sacred to him whose name is holy and reverend, and where was the seat of his glorious Majesty, and therefore not to be defiled by fornication or idolatry, or by doing anything in it unseemly and unbecoming

9. (LEV. 19:31) TURNING TO MEDIUMS OR WIZARDS.

- (a) **[John Wesley's Notes on the Bible]** *Wizards*—Them that have entered into covenant with the devil, by whose help they foretel many things to come, and acquaint men with secret things. See Lev 20:27 Deu 18:11 1Sam 28:3,7,9 2Kings 21:6.
- (b) **[Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (1871)]**
Regard not them that have familiar spirits—The Hebrew word, rendered "familiar spirit," signifies the belly, and sometimes a leathern bottle, from its similarity to the belly. It was applied in the sense of this passage to ventriloquists, who pretended to have communication with the invisible world. The Hebrews were strictly forbidden to consult them as the vain but high pretensions of those impostors were derogatory to the honor of God and subversive of their covenant relations with Him as His people.
neither seek after wizards—fortunetellers, who pretended, as the Hebrew word indicates, to prognosticate by palmistry (or an inspection of the lines of the hand) the future fate of those who applied to them.
- (c) **[Kretzmann Popular Commentary]** All *[communication]* with conjurers of the dead and with wizards was equivalent to desecration of the holy relation with God, "*The chief means used by both these classes of persons was the consulting with the spirits of the departed. While this furnishes an incidental testimony all along to the belief of the Israelites in the life beyond the grave, it is*

self-evident that all such attempts to secure knowledge which God has not put in the power of living man to acquire are a resistance to His will, and a chafing against the barriers He has imposed. It is remarkable that such attempts should have been persisted in through all ages and in all lands." (Gardiner.)

- (d) —[**Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible**] A caution against all communion with witches, and those that were in league with familiar spirits: "*Regard them not, seek not after them, be not in fear of any evil from them nor in hopes of any good from them. Regard not their threatenings, or promises, or predictions; seek not to them for discovery or advice, for, if you do, you are defiled by it, and rendered abominable both to God and your own consciences.*" This was the sin that completed Saul's wickedness, for which he was rejected of God, 1 Chron. x. 13.

Having looked at the background of each of God's rules in this section of the Bible, we turn to the reasons, if any, why some or all of the rules no longer apply to modern Christians. And, of paramount importance, how are we to decide, based on Biblical principles, which other rules still apply and which don't?

Extending "Biblical principles" beyond the clear, express language of the Bible is a risky proposition. It has led to the creation of concepts such as *purgatory*, *limbo*, and *baptism of the dead*—ideas which are accepted by large religious institutions, which identify themselves as Christian, yet which are rejected by evangelical Christians, among others.

But also consider that God's *Trinity* is not mentioned specifically in the Bible, but widely accepted by the great majority of Christians, both Roman Catholic and Protestant. So if you accept the concept of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—you must admit there being some room to make logical, Biblically supported conclusions beyond the scriptures themselves.

Many Christian scholars find the answer in the division of the Old Testament law into three categories:

1. **Moral Law:** The moral laws are direct commands of God. A good example are the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:1-17). The moral laws reveal the nature and will of God, and still apply to us today. We do not obey this moral law as a way to obtain salvation, but to live in ways pleasing to God.

(a) [**S. Mich ael Houdmann**]⁴

The moral laws, or *mishpatim*, relate to justice and judgment and are often translated as "ordinances." *Mishpatim* are said to be based on God's holy nature. As such, the ordinances are holy, just, and unchanging. Their purpose is to promote the welfare of those who obey. The value of the laws is considered obvious by reason and common sense. The moral law encompasses regulations on justice, respect, and sexual conduct, and includes the Ten Commandments. It also includes penalties for failure to obey the ordinances. Moral law does not point people to Christ; it merely illuminates the fallen state of all mankind.

Modern Protestants are divided over the applicability of *mishpatim* in the church age. Some believe that Jesus' assertion that the law will remain in effect until the earth passes away (Matthew 5:18) means that believers are still bound to it. Others, however, understand that Jesus fulfilled this requirement (Matthew 5:17), and that we are instead under the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2), which is thought to be "love God and love others" (Matthew 22:36-40). Although many of the moral laws in the Old Testament give excellent examples as to how to love God and love others, and freedom from the law is not license to sin (Romans 6:15), we are not specifically bound by *mishpatim*.

⁴"What is the difference between the ceremonial law, the moral law, and the judicial law in the Old Testament?," Got Questions.org (<http://www.gotquestions.org/ceremonial-law.html>), 2-27-2014.

- (b) One commentator provides his top 10 reasons to affirm this three-fold distinction of the Old Covenant law:⁵
- i. **A special name** — Only the moral law, as found in The Ten Commandments, was set apart by a special name: Ten Words. (Exod 34:28; Deut 4:13; 10:4).
 - ii. **Written in stone** — Only the Ten Commandments were written on stone tablets (Deut 4:13).
 - iii. **By the finger of God** — Only the Ten Commandments were written by the finger of God (Exod 31:18.)
 - iv. **Location, location, location** — The Ten Commandments were placed in the ark (Exod 25:16, 21-22). The other laws were set next to the ark (Deut 31:26).
 - v. **The end** — After the Ten Commandments (Deut 5:7-21) Scripture says that God “added no more” (Deut 5:22). Since there were still other laws to come, it means he added nothing else to the Ten Commandments. In other words, though there are other commandments there is no such thing as the Eleven Commandments.
 - vi. **Laws from the pattern** — Though both the civil and ceremonial laws are typological, only the tabernacle and all the ceremonial laws connected with it (Exod 25-Lev 7) are derived from the “pattern” Moses was shown in heaven (Exod 25:9, 40; Heb 8:5).
 - vii. **Laws for the land** — Unlike the moral and ceremonial law, the “statutes and ordinances” of the civil laws were to be only observed “in the land” (Deut 4:5, 14; 5:31; 6:1; 12:1).
 - viii. **Fulfill or abolish** — Jesus’ statement in Matt 5:17 and Paul’s statement in Eph 2:14-15 can only make sense if you recognize the three-fold distinction in the law.
 - ix. **Apostolic teaching** — The Apostles work within these categories. The moral laws are still binding (Eph 6:1), the civil laws have passed and we are now be subject to the non-Israelite laws (Rom 13:1), the ceremonial laws have passed away because they were types and shadows fulfilled in Christ (Col 2:16-17; Acts 11:9-12)
 - x. **It’s the [traditional church] view**— The three-fold distinction of the law is a doctrine that has united Christians from different times and in theological traditions. Justin Martyr, Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, the Westminster Assembly, and many others affirmed it.
- (c) **[Jonathan McLatchie⁶]** The moral law describes God’s commandments which are binding regardless of cultural contingencies. The moral law includes the ten commandments, which are given in Exodus 20.⁷ According to the Bible, we have an awareness of God’s moral laws written on our hearts (e.g. Romans 2) but we have all violated this standard and thus fall under the righteousness condemnation of God (Romans 3:23). Galatians 3:13-14 describes God’s solution...

Anticipating an Objection: But Couldn’t The Sexual Regulations of Leviticus 18 Be Regarded As Ceremonial Law Too?

One can anticipate an objection to all of this: This being the case, the skeptic might ask, how can you with confidence say that homosexuality comes under God’s (non-culturally-contingent) universal moral prohibitions? How can one rule out that these sexual regulations (described in

⁵Rev. Christopher Chelpka, Pastor of Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Tucson, Arizona. *Top 10 Reasons to Affirm the Moral, Civil, and Ceremonial Laws* (<http://covenantoptucson.org/top-10-reasons-to-affirm-the-moral-civil-and-ceremonial-laws>, 5-31-2012).

⁶Cherry Picking the Bible? Are Christians Expected to Follow the Levitical Laws?, Cross-Examined.ORG (<http://crossexamined.org/cherry-picking-the-bible-are-christians-expected-to-follow-the-levitical-laws>), 12-10-2011.

⁷But not everyone agrees all of the 10 Commandments are included in the “moral law.” For example, one commentator maintains the Sabbath is part of the “ceremonial law.” See Michael Morrison, *“Is the Sabbath a Moral Law or a Ceremonial Law?”* Grace Communion International (<http://www.gci.org/law/sabbath/moral>), 2-27-2014.

Leviticus 18) are not also part of the ceremonial law? In response to this, I would urge that the objector examine carefully the context.

Leviticus 18 begins with God saying to Moses,

“[2] Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘I am the LORD your God. [3] You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. [4] You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the LORD your God. [5] Keep my decrees and laws, for the person who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD.’”

After listing the various forms of sexual sin, the chapter ends,

“[24] Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. [25] Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. [26] But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the foreigners residing among you must not do any of these detestable things, [27] for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. [28] And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.”

It is thus abundantly clear from the context that the chapter is describing universal moral prohibitions. Indeed, it is violation of those prohibitions that has led God to punish and drive out the nations before Israel. God gives Israel a warning about what will happen to her if she falls into the practices of the nations before her.

Furthermore, God’s prohibitions against homosexual behaviour are reiterated in the new testament. In Romans 1, the apostle Paul writes,

“[26] Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. [27] In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20 also describe the abomination of sexual immorality, and Paul urges the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 5 to expel an immoral brother for sleeping with his father’s wife. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 also says,

“[9] Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men [10] nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. [11] And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” There is thus little room for argument about what division of the law is in mind here.

2. **Ceremonial Law:** This type of law relates to Israel’s worship. (Lev 1:1-13) The laws pointed forward to Jesus Christ and were no longer necessary after Jesus’ death and resurrection. Though we are no longer bound to them, the principles behind the ceremonial laws, that is to worship and love God, still apply.

- (a) **[Jonathan McLatchie]** Only God’s moral law is applicable to us today. The ceremonial and judicial laws of ancient Israel are not. Galatians 2:1-3; 5:1-11; 6:11-16; 1 Corinthians 7:17-20; Colossians 2:8-12; Phillipians 3:1-3 all indicate that the covenant of circumcision has now been done away with. What counts now is, in a manner of speaking, a circumcision of heart — which takes the form of faith in Christ and repentance from our sin.

(b) **[Michael Morrison]**⁸

God gave his people ceremonial laws, too. These laws do not contradict God's nature, but they reflect it only in a very general sense. For example, he told the Israelites to have a weekly offering of "showbread." This offering, like other offerings, showed that God is holy and worthy of worship, but the Bible does not assign any theological significance to the details of the offering. The quantity of flour does not tell us much about God. With some ingenuity, some people may see symbolic significance in every detail, but other people may see different significance in the same details. Since the Bible itself does not tell us what the significance is, we cannot be sure.

A cleansing ritual is another illustration of ceremonial or ritual law: the priest was to touch the person's right earlobe, right thumb, and right big toe (Leviticus 14:1-18). Although God gave these laws and expected them to be kept as written, these details do not reveal much about God's character. Although God may have had a particular reason for specifying exact quantities and precise details, he has not told us the reason, so it therefore cannot tell us much about God.

Some aspects of the rituals and ceremonies, from our perspective, seem to be arbitrary. For all we know, God could have required the left cheek instead of the right earlobe. He could have required 10 percent less bread than he did. Some of these details do not seem to be based on anything intrinsic—they were simply what God specified. Since we do not know the divine significance of such details, they had to be given by special revelation.

The Israelites (like other peoples around them) might have invented a bread offering on their own, but they may not have used the precise quantities God specified. Even without God's special revelation to them, they might have had a concept of religious impurity, and from that developed a religious cleansing ritual, but they probably wouldn't have come up with the exact formula God gave them.

Although the ceremonial laws portray concepts like sacrifice and cleansing that are found in many cultures, the details of God's ceremonial laws are given by special revelation, not by ideas that people could figure out for themselves.

(c) **[S. Michael Houdmann]**⁹

The ceremonial laws are called *hukkim* or *chuvah* in Hebrew, which literally means "custom of the nation"; the words are often translated as "statutes." These laws are not obvious to common sense; for example, the destruction of perfectly good animals for sacrifice and the rejection of food sources such as pork and rabbit. Instead, these statutes seem to focus the adherent's attention on God. They include instructions on regaining right standing with God (e.g., sacrifices and other ceremonies regarding "uncleanness"), remembrances of God's work in Israel (e.g., feasts and festivals), specific regulations meant to distinguish Israelites from their pagan neighbors (e.g., dietary and clothing restrictions), and signs that point to the coming Messiah (e.g., the Sabbath, circumcision, Passover, and the redemption of the first-born). Some Jews believe that the ceremonial law is not fixed. They hold that, as societies evolve, so do God's expectations of how His followers should relate to Him. This view is not indicated in the Bible.

Christians are not bound by ceremonial law. Since the church is not the nation of Israel, memorial festivals, such as the Feast of Weeks and Passover, do not apply. Galatians 3:23-25 explains that since Jesus has come, Christians are not required to sacrifice or circumcise. There is still debate in Protestant churches over the applicability of the Sabbath. Some say that its inclusion in the Ten Commandments gives it the weight of moral law. Others quote Colossians 2:16-17 and Romans

⁸ "Is the Sabbath a Moral Law or a Ceremonial Law?" Grace Communion International (<http://www.gci.org/law/sabbath/moral>), 2-27-2014.

⁹ "What is the difference between the ceremonial law, the moral law, and the judicial law in the Old Testament?" Got Questions.org (<http://www.gotquestions.org/ceremonial-law.html>), 2-27-2014.

14:5 to explain that Jesus has fulfilled the Sabbath and become our Sabbath rest. As Romans 14:5 says, "Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind." The applicability of the Old Testament law in the life of a Christian has always related to its usefulness in loving God and others. If someone feels observing the Sabbath aids him in this, he is free to observe it.

3. **Civil Law:** This law dictated Israel's daily living (Deut 24:10-11); but modern society and culture are so radically different that some of these guidelines cannot be followed specifically. The principles behind the commands are used to guide our conduct. Civil laws are those that deal with Israel's legal system, including the issues of land, economics, and criminal justice. An example of a civil law is Deuteronomy 15:1, "At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts."

A summary of the forgoing principals is found in the following article:

[**Troy Gibson**¹⁰] The Lord Jesus Christ came not to destroy but to fulfill all of the law — yet he also gave new laws to his followers through his inspired apostles (e.g. Ephesians 4:17, Philippians 2:12b). So what does the coming of Christ mean for you and for me in regard to the law of God?

First, Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial laws, in that he was God with us (the true Temple of God); through his perfect obedience to those laws; and especially through his one, perfect, final and complete sacrifice for sin at Calvary. The OT ceremonial laws ended with the work of Christ at the cross. You and I can approach the infinite God through the intercession of our great High Priest.

Second, Jesus fulfilled the civil laws by obeying them perfectly and by demonstrating that a true Israelite was any person, regardless of birth, who looked by faith to him for salvation (Romans 9:6). As the New Testament plainly teaches, God no longer rules His people through an organized nation-state called "Israel" (or anything else for that matter); thus a Christian does not have to abide by the state-laws of Old Testament Israel.

Third, Jesus fulfilled the moral laws of the Old Testament both in his life and in his doctrine. Not only was he "made under the law" to redeem you and me who have failed to keep the moral law of God perfectly (Galatians 4:1-5, St. Matthew 5:48) through his sacrifice for sins; he obeyed the law so that you and I might be credited with his righteousness (another term for "perfect obedience to the law").

Thus through faith in Christ, who fulfilled the Old Testament laws in his person and in his work, you are 1) forgiven for breaking the moral law of God and 2) credited with Jesus' perfect obedience to the moral law. What a "grand transaction," as an astute theologian once observed!

If you believe on Christ as your Redeemer, then, are you free from the Old Testament laws? Yes and no.

Yes, you are free from having to keep the civil and ceremonial laws. They were temporary and have been fulfilled by Christ. Yes, you are free from the fear of God's wrath from not having kept His law perfectly.

But no, you are not free to "live like you want." If you'll notice, Jesus not only reiterates some of the Ten Commandments in his Sermon on the Mount — he actually adds to them! For example, adultery becomes more than a physical act; it now involves thoughts. Time and again the New Testament writers call Christians to live out the implications

¹⁰ "Dan Savage joins many evangelicals by failing to distinguish between the transcendent moral law and the temporary civil & ceremonial laws in the Bible," The Reformed Mind (<http://thereformedmind.wordpress.com/2012/05/15/dan-savage-joins-many-evangelicals-by-failing-to-distinguish-between-old-and-new-testament-law/>), 5-15-2012.

of their faith, and that same New Testament ethic is derived from the Ten Commandments/moral law of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament laws, therefore, show you and me our need for the Savior as well as his perfect fulfillment of them. The moral law also serves as a guide for you in your Christian life.

To put it another way: you can eat shellfish if you want; the ceremonial law is past. You can live in a country that doesn't call for the stoning of adulterers; the civil law has been abrogated. But it never has been acceptable for you to steal, to worship idols, to covet or to break any of the other moral laws of the Old Testament, laws that are written on every person's heart. Those laws transcend time and culture.

What is the Year of Jubilee? How does it work, and what is the point of it?

The Year of Jubilee. **Read Leviticus 25:8-34.**

MATTHEW HENRY: What was to be done in [the year of Jubilee] was extraordinary. Besides the common rest of the land, which was observed every sabbatical year (11, 12), and the release of personal debts (Deut. xv. 2, 3), there was to be the legal restoration of every Israelite to all the property, and all the liberty, which had been alienated from him since the last jubilee; so that never was any people so secured in their liberty and property (those glories of a people) as Israel was. Effectual care was taken that while they kept close to God these should not only not be taken from them by the violence of others, but not thrown away by their own folly.¹¹

EASTON'S BIBLE DICTIONARY: The return of the jubilee year was proclaimed by a blast of trumpets which sounded throughout the land. There is no record in Scripture of the actual observance of this festival, but there are numerous allusions (Isa. 5:7, 8, 9, 10; 61:1, 2; Ezek. 7:12, 13; Neh. 5:1-19; 2 Chr. 36:21) which place it beyond a doubt that it was observed.

The advantages of this institution were manifold. "(1) It would prevent the accumulation of land on the part of a few to the detriment of the community at large. (2) It would render it impossible for any one to be born to absolute poverty, since every one had his hereditary land. (3) It would preclude those inequalities which are produced by extremes of riches and poverty, and which make one man domineer over another. (4) It would utterly do away with slavery. (5) It would afford a fresh opportunity to those who were reduced by adverse circumstances to begin again their career of industry in the patrimony which they had temporarily forfeited. (6) It would periodically rectify the disorders which crept into the state in the course of time, preclude the division of the people into nobles and plebeians, and preserve the theocracy inviolate."¹²

Question: How do the Israelite Year of Jubilee and "debt relief" compare to modern political, economic, financial and legal concepts??

See the table on the following page.

New Testament

Why did Jesus lay his hands on the blind man twice, in order to heal him?¹³

¹¹Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible. See Deuteronomy 15:1-2 (WEBME). "*At the end of every seven years, you shall cancel debts. This is the way it shall be done: every creditor shall release that which he has lent to his neighbor. He shall not require payment from his neighbor and his brother; because the LORD's release has been proclaimed.*"

¹²Easton's 1897 Bible Dictionary

¹³Note: This one of the few stories that appears in ONLY the Gospel of Mark.

Bible Rule	Modern American Rule
Tithe to Levites required Second tithe, every third year for charity	Tithe voluntary to Church Charities partially take care of the poor; Mandatory taxes to civil authorities funds government welfare / assistance. Note that under both systems the provision of the poor should be voluntary, but is largely assured by mandatory contributions—to the religious authorities in the Old Testament via the tithe; and via taxes to the civil authorities in America.
Jubilee: property returned to original owner every 50 years; mortgages cancelled.	Bankruptcy cancels some debts, but generally does not forgive mortgages or restore land.
Debts of Hebrews forgiven every 7 years. Foreigners' debts remained.	Statute of limitations vary, but generally run 4 or 5 years after the breach of an obligation for a debt. Residents and foreigners treated the same. Bankruptcy dissolves some debts.
Freely lend to the needy, without regard to the 7th year of remission.	Lend and charge interest. Sue the debtor if non-payment
Hebrew slaves freed every seven years.	Slavery officially abolished, but some employers apparently aren't aware of this fact.

Table 1: Debt forgiveness

“[22] He [Jesus] came to Bethsaida. They brought a blind man to him, and begged him to touch him. [23] He took hold of the blind man by the hand, and brought him out of the village. When he had spit on his eyes, and laid his hands on him, he asked him if he saw anything. [24] He looked up, and said, “I see men; for I see them like trees walking.” [25] Then again he laid his hands on his eyes. He looked intently, and was restored, and saw everyone clearly. [26] He sent him away to his house, saying, “Don’t enter into the village, nor tell anyone in the village.” **Mark 8:22-26 (WEB).**

MATTHEW HENRY: [Christ heals] a blind man brought to Christ by his friends, with a desire that he would touch him. Here appears the faith of those that brought him—they doubted not but that one touch of Christ’s hand would recover him his sight; but the man himself showed not that earnestness for, or expectation of, a cure that other blind men did. If those that are spiritually blind, do not pray for themselves, yet let their friends and relations pray for them, that Christ would be pleased to touch them.

...Here is the cure of the blind man, by that blessed Oculist [eye doctor], who came into the world to preach the recovering of sight to the blind (Luke iv. 18), and to give what he preached. In this cure we may observe, that Christ used a sign; he spat on his eyes (spat into them, so some), and put his hand upon him. He could have cured him, as he did others, with a word speaking, but thus he was pleased to assist his faith which was very weak, and to help him against his unbelief.¹⁴

Jesus said in Mark 10:14-15, “Allow the little children to come to me! Don’t forbid them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Most certainly I tell you, whoever will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child, he will in no way enter into it.” Should we place any emphasis on Bible study if God admits those who are as ignorant as little children? These verses are no commentary on the relative state of knowledge or learning. Rather they relate to the believer’s frame of mind.

[Barnes’ New Testament Notes] “Little child” means “with the temper and spirit of a child teachable, mild, humble, and free from prejudice and obstinacy.”

[John Gill’s Expositor] “Little child” refers to “laying aside all pride and prejudice, attending thereunto with humility and meekness.”

[Matthew Henry’s Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible] We must stand affected to Christ and his grace as little children do to their parents, nurses, and teachers. We must be inquisitive, as children, must learn as children (that is the learning age), and in learning must believe, *Oportet discentem credere*—A learner must believe. The mind of a child is white paper (*tabula rasa*—a mere blank), you may write upon it what you will; such must our minds be to the pen of the blessed Spirit. Children are under government; so must we be. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? We must receive the kingdom of God as the child Samuel did, “*Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.*” Little children depend upon their parents’ wisdom and care, are carried in their arms, go where they send them, and take what they provide for them; and thus must we receive the kingdom of God, with a humble resignation of ourselves to Jesus Christ, and an easy dependence upon him, both for strength and righteousness, for tuition, provision, and a portion.

[Robertson’s Word Pictures in the New Testament] How does a little child receive the kingdom of God? The little child learns to obey its parents simply and uncomplainingly.

¹⁴Matthew Henry’s Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible

There are some new psychologists who argue against teaching obedience to children. The results have not been inspiring. Jesus here presents the little child with trusting and simple and loving obedience as the model for adults in coming into the kingdom. Jesus does not here say that children are in the kingdom of God because they are children.

Random Quotes

Mostly good advice – The following quotations are attributed to John Wayne:

- Life's tough. It's even tougher if you're stupid
- Talk low, Talk slow, and Don't say too much
- A man deserves a second chance, but keep an eye on him
- A man's got to do what a man's got to do
- Thanking people is dangerous business. A name always slips your mind.
- Never apologize, mister, it's a sign of weakness
- I'd like to know why well-educated idiots keep apologizing for lazy and complaining people who think the world owes them a living

"When everything's coming your way, you're in the wrong lane."

– unknown

"Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored."

— Aldous Huxley (1894 – 1963), "Proper Studies", 1927

"Glory is fleeting, but obscurity is forever."

— Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)

"I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody."

— Bill Cosby (1937 –)

I would rather wear out than rust out. But I would rather burn out than wear out.

— source withheld

Notes:

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